



April 7, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Regional Freedom of Information Officer
U.S. EPA, Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue (6MD-OE)
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Communications Regarding U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Plan for Responding to the Remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas; Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Texas; Regional Haze and Interstate Visibility, 82 Fed. Reg. 912 (Jan. 4, 2017); or Interstate Transport of Fine Particulate Matter: Revision of Federal Implementation Plan Requirements for Texas, 81 Fed. Reg. 78954 (Nov. 10, 2016).

Dear Regional FOI Officer:

This is a request for information on behalf of Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association, and Earthjustice (collectively, "Conservation Organizations") pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") FOIA regulations, 40 C.F.R. § 2.107.

The Conservation Organizations also request a fee waiver for this request under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 40 C.F.R. § 2.107.

I. Records Requested

The Conservation Organizations request the following records created, stored, or received since November 8, 2016 concerning:

- the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA's") plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas;¹ and/or
- EPA's Proposed Rule captioned, Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Texas; Regional Haze and Interstate Visibility, which was published at 82 Fed. Reg. 912 (Jan. 4, 2017); and/or
- EPA's Proposed Rule captioned, Interstate Transport of Fine Particulate Matter: Revision of Federal Implementation Plan Requirements for Texas, 81 Fed. Reg. 78954 (Nov. 10, 2016).

Specifically, we request:

- (1) All records reflecting communications between EPA (or the Department of Justice) and any of the following entities concerning EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings: the State of Texas, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Luminant Generation Company LLC, Big Brown Power Company LLC, Utility Air Regulatory Group, Southwestern Public Service Company, Coletto Creek Power, NRG Texas Power LLC, and/or any other entity or individual representing an electric generating utility or the utility industry;
- (2) All records reflecting communications between EPA (or the Department of Justice) and the White House concerning the EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings;
- (3) All records reflecting communications between EPA (or the Department of Justice) and the presidential transition team² concerning the EPA's plan for

¹ See June 27, 2016 Memorandum from Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator to Air Division Directors, Regions 1-10 Re: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Plan for Responding to Remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule Phase 2 SO₂ Budgets for Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas.

² The "presidential transition team" may include, but is not limited to, the following individuals: Myron Ebell, Charles Munoz, David Schnare, George Sugiyama, David Kreutzer, Doug Ericksen, Holly Greaves, Justin Schwab, Patrick Davis, Don Benton, and Scott Pruitt.

responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings;

- (4) All records created, stored, or received by the EPA Administrator, or any of the Administrator's staff, concerning EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings;

For purposes of this request, the term "records" means information of any kind, including, but not limited to, documents (handwritten, typed, electronic or otherwise produced, reproduced, or stored), letters, e-mails, facsimiles, memoranda, correspondence, notes, databases, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, minutes of meetings, electronic and magnetic recordings of meetings, and any other compilation of data from which information can be obtained. As used herein, "and" and "or" shall be construed either conjunctively or disjunctively as required by the context to bring within the scope of these requests any information which might be deemed outside their scope by any other construction.

Further, for purposes of this request, the term "records" includes any personal email messages, telephone voice mails or text messages, and internet "chat" or social media messages, to the full extent that any such messages fall within the definition of "agency records" subject to FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

We remind you that FOIA requires that you respond within 20 working days of your receipt of this request, *see* 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i), and that that response must "at least indicate within the relevant time period the scope of the documents [you] will produce and the exemptions[, if any, you] will claim with respect to any withheld documents." *Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington v. F.E.C.*, 711 F.3d 180, 182-83 (D.C. Cir. 2013).

We ask that you disclose this information as it becomes available to you without waiting until all of the communications and records have been assembled for the time period requested. The Conservation Organizations request electronic copies of the records whenever possible.

II. Claims of Exemption from Disclosure

If EPA regards any documents as exempt from required disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, please identify each allegedly exempt record in writing, provide a brief description of that record, and explain the agency's justification for withholding it.

This explanation should take the form of a *Vaughn* index, as described in *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), and other related cases. If a document contains both exempt and non-exempt information, please provide those portions of the document that are not exempted from disclosure. Finally, if a document does not exist, please indicate that in your written response.

III. Fee Waiver

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 40 C.F.R. § 2.107, the Public Interest Groups request that EPA waive all fees associated with responding to this request because the groups seek this information in the public interest and will not benefit commercially from this request. If EPA does not waive the fees entirely, the Public Interest Groups request that it reduce them to the extent possible.

FOIA provides that fees shall be reduced “if disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.”³ EPA’s FOIA regulations contain an identical requirement.⁴ The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has identified six factors to assess whether a requester is entitled to a waiver of fees under FOIA, and the D.C. Circuit and other Courts of Appeals reference and apply these factors.⁵ These factors are:

A. Disclosure of the Information ‘is in the Public Interest Because it is Likely to Contribute Significantly to Public Understanding of the Operations or Activities of the Government.’

(1) **The subject of the request:** Whether the subject of the requested records concerns ‘the operations or activities of the government’;

³ 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

⁴ 40 C.F.R. § 2.107.

⁵ See, e.g., Stephen J. Markman, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, FOIA Update, Vol. VIII, No. 1, New Fee Waiver Policy Guidance at 3-10 (1987), *available at* http://www.justice.gov/oip/foia_updates/Vol_VIII_1/viii1page2.htm; *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, 365 F.3d 1108, 1126 (D.C. Cir. 2004) (stating that “for a request to be in the ‘public interest,’ four criteria must be satisfied,” and citing agency’s multi-factor fee waiver regulation).

- (2) **The informative value of the information to be disclosed:** Whether the disclosure is 'likely to contribute' to an understanding of government operations or activities;
 - (3) **The contribution to an understanding of the subject by the general public likely to result from disclosure:** Whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to 'public understanding'; and
 - (4) **The significance of the contribution to public understanding:** Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute 'significantly' to public understanding of government operations or activities.
- B. Disclosure of the Information 'is Not Primarily in the Commercial Interest of the Requester.'
- (1) **The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest:** Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure; and, if so
 - (2) **The primary interest in disclosure:** Whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large, in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is 'primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.'⁶

The Conservation Organizations' request complies with each of the factors agencies weigh in a fee waiver determination, as demonstrated below. If this information is not sufficient to justify a fee waiver, please contact us for further documentation before deciding upon the waiver request.

A. Public Interest Factor

The disclosure of this information is in the "public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government."⁷ The Conservation Organizations' request complies with each of the criteria DOJ has identified for the public interest factor.

⁶ Markman, *supra* note 5.

⁷ See 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(1).

i. The request concerns the operations or activities of the government.

The Conversation Organizations seek information related to EPA's communications and other records concerning the EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings since the November 2016 presidential election.⁸ Since EPA is an arm of the federal government, such EPA records plainly concern "operations or activities of the government."⁹

ii. The disclosure is "likely to contribute" to an understanding of government operations and activities.

The records the Conservation Organizations have requested bear upon any internal review of EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings that EPA has undertaken since the November 2016 presidential election, as well as any communications that EPA has received concerning the rule from outside entities. It is not currently public knowledge whether EPA has, since the November 2016 presidential election, conducted any internal review or has received any communication from outside entities, such as industry groups or the White House, concerning EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings. Thus, disclosure is "likely to contribute" to public understanding of government operations and activities.¹⁰

iii. The information will contribute to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject.

This information will contribute to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject.¹¹ The general public is already following issues

⁸ See June 27, 2016 Memorandum from Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator to Air Division Directors, Regions 1-10 Re: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Plan for Responding to Remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule Phase 2 SO₂ Budgets for Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas; *see also EME Homer City Generation, L.P. v. EPA*, 795 F.3d 118, 138 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (remanding for reconsideration the Phase 2 CSAPR sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide budgets for eleven states, including Texas).

⁹ See 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(i).

¹⁰ See 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(ii).

¹¹ See 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(iii).

related to air pollution from coal- and gas-fired power plants, which has frequently been the focus of investigative reports by members of the media.¹² Thus, any EPA communications between the State of Texas, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Luminant Generation Company LLC, Big Brown Power Company LLC, Utility Air Regulatory Group, Southwestern Public Service Company, Coletto Creek Power, NRG Texas Power LLC, and/or any other entity or individual representing an electric generating utility or the utility industry, concerning EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings will receive close and critical scrutiny from members of the public and the news media.

The Conservation Organizations are particularly able to ensure that the information requested will be disseminated to the general public.

The Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization, with more than 2.7 million members and supporters, including online activists and newsletter subscribers. Its website is highly trafficked and Sierra Club media and communications reach hundreds of thousands of people through an extensive digital communications network and online information system, print magazine, radio show, web videos, and news reports.

NPCA is the only independent, nonpartisan membership organization devoted exclusively to advocacy on behalf of the National Parks System. Its mission is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations.

Earthjustice is a non-profit public interest law organization dedicated to protecting the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth, and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment.¹³

The Conservation Organizations are national non-profit conservation organizations with tens of thousands of members, supporters, and local chapters in Texas and throughout the nation dedicated to protecting and enhancing air quality across the

¹² See, e.g., Heather Rogers, ProPublica, *Lobbyists Bidding to Block Government Regs Set Sights on Secretive White House Office*, July 31, 2014, available at <http://www.propublica.org/article/lobbyists-bidding-block-government-regs-sights-set-secretive-white-house>; Eric Lipton and Coral Davenport, New York Times, *Scott Pruitt, Trump's E.P.A. Pick, Backed Industry Donors Over Regulators*, Jan. 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/14/us/scott-pruitt-trump-epa-pick.html?_r=0.

¹³ See <http://earthjustice.org/about>.

nation—especially in the national parks and wilderness areas. The Conservation Organizations and their members have particular interests in protecting the National Parks, Wilderness Areas, and the people who explore and enjoy those areas from the significant environmental and public health impacts of large sources of air pollution.

To further those interests, the Conservation Organizations have played significant roles in numerous administrative and judicial proceedings that directly relate to the enforcement and implementation of the Clean Air Act in Texas. In recent years, the Conservation Organizations have participated in several rulemakings and judicial proceedings related to visibility protection provisions and its so-called “good neighbor” requirements in Texas. In fact, the Conservation Organizations have submitted extensive expert analysis and legal comments relating to the above-captioned rulemakings, urging EPA to strengthen Clean Air Act rules designed to protect air quality in the national parks and beyond from pollution emitted from coal-fired power plants in Texas. Conservation Organizations have engaged in similar administrative and judicial proceedings across the country to fulfill their missions to protect and enhance the national parks, wilderness areas, and to protect their members—and the general public—who recreate in those areas or who are otherwise exposed to the air pollution emitted by these facilities, and who are concerned about resulting health and environmental effects.

In addition, the Conservation Organizations have the “ability and intention” to convey the information sought by the FOIA request to the public.¹⁴ The Conservation Organizations can publicize information received from this request in monthly electronic newsletters, through social media, and email action alerts, which together reach hundreds of thousands of members, supporters, and subscribers. The Conservation Organizations’ communications staff can also disseminate newsworthy information obtained from this request to the media.

In sum, the Conservation Organizations have the ability to digest and quickly disseminate information gleaned from FOIA requests to the general public, and will make any newsworthy information or documents received in response to this request publicly available and will use them as the bases for public comments and further action regarding EPA’s plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings. Indeed, the material responsive to this FOIA request will not only inform the Conservation Organizations’ legal and technical comments regarding EPA’s proposed Regional Haze Implementation Plan for Texas, 82 Fed. Reg. 912 (Jan. 4, 2017), which are due May 5,

¹⁴ See, e.g., Markman, *supra* note 5.

2017, but the materials will be disseminated to inform and urge the public to participate in the rulemaking. Thus, the Conservation Organizations are uniquely well positioned to analyze and publicize the requested information.

iv. The information will contribute “significantly” to public understanding of government operations or activities.

The information the Public Interest Groups seek will contribute “significantly” to the ongoing public conversation about pollution from coal- and gas-fired power plants.¹⁵ None of the materials the groups have requested are now widely known (if they have been made public at all), yet they are essential to the public’s understanding of EPA’s plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings, or any communications with outside entities concerning those rules. On June 27, 2016, EPA issued a memorandum informing the State of Texas of the Agency’s plan for responding to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals’ remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (“CSAPR”) for Texas. In that memorandum, EPA invited Texas to voluntarily participate in the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule through the submittal of a SIP revision showing that its affected sources are required to participate in CSAPR with annual emission budgets for sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides no less stringent than the budgets EPA codified at 40 C.F.R. §§ 97.710(a) and 97.410(a). Alternatively, EPA indicated that it would withdraw the federal Clean Air Act implementation plan requiring Texas sources to participate in CSAPR, and would address any remaining Clean Air Act obligations for the state in a subsequent federal implementation plan.

EPA subsequently proposed federal plans to address Texas’s Clean Air Act obligations left unfulfilled by the withdrawal of CSAPR—namely, the state’s obligations under the visibility and so-called good-neighbor provisions of the Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7410(a)(1)(D), 7491. 81 Fed. Reg. 78954 (Nov. 10, 2016); 82 Fed. Reg. 912 (Jan. 4, 2017). Those rulemakings remain pending. However, the extent to which EPA has engaged in communications with outside entities with respect to either of those rulemakings is not currently public information. As discussed above, the Conservation Organizations will make any newsworthy information or documents received in response to this request publicly available and will use them as the bases for public advocacy, including in any future public proceedings concerning these rules. Releasing this information will, thus, significantly enhance public understanding of any EPA activities since the November

¹⁵ See 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(iv).

2016 presidential election concerning EPA's plan for responding to the remand of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule for Texas or either of the above-captioned rulemakings.

B. Commercial Interest Factor

The Conservation Organizations are non-profit organizations with no commercial, trade, or profit interests in the requested information. They seek to use this information solely to inform the public and to support advocacy efforts around protecting human health and the environment through effective implementation of the Clean Air Act. Thus, there is no relevant commercial interest here, and the request is entirely in the public interest.

For all of the foregoing reasons, a fee waiver is warranted here under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 40 C.F.R. § 2.107. If EPA does not believe that the above information is sufficient to justify a fee waiver, please contact us for further documentation before deciding upon the waiver request.

Thank you for your assistance processing this request. Please contact me at the email or telephone number below if you have any questions or concerns about this request for information.

Sincerely,



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